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Tuna Newsletter

National Marine Fisheries Service
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May 1993 **Issue 109**

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U.S. TUNA STATISTICS

Editor's note: The following articles were prepared by NMFS personnel from data and information gathered from sources in the U.S. tuna industry and government.

U.S. CANNED TUNA INDUSTRY HIGHLIGHTS, FOURTH QUARTER 1992

Total receipts of tuna by U.S. canners during the fourth quarter of 1992 (October-December) increased by 4% to the equivalent of 123,500 short tons (st) of whole fish (round weight), compared to the fourth quarter of 1991 (Table 1). The principal species received was skipjack tuna with 63% of the total, followed by albacore and yellowfin with 22% and 15% of the total, respectively. Receipts for all of 1992 totaled 467,500 st, a 1% decrease from the previous year (Table 2). Albacore receipts were up 37% for the quarter and up 27% for the year; yellowfin receipts were up 7% for the quarter and down 13% for the year; skipjack receipts were down 5% and 4% for the quarter and year, respectively. Although the vast majority of tuna received by U.S. canners is whole fish, some quantity of tuna is received as loins or gilled-and-gutted. The ratio of tuna loins to total receipts for the fourth quarter of 1992 was 6%, compared to 11% for 1991. Receipts of tuna loins for all of 1992 totaled 28,300 st, down 25% from the previous year. (The round weight totals used above were approximated by converting weights of loins and gilled-and-gutted receipts by factors of 2.25 and 1.11, respectively. For the remainder of this article, unconverted receipts are used unless otherwise stated.)

Receipts of tuna in American Samoa and California for the fourth quarter of 1992 were up 9%, compared to fourth quarter 1991. (Table 3). Receipts in Puerto Rico were also up by 9%. Domestically-caught deliveries to canneries in Puerto Rico were up by 91%, mainly due to

Table 1. Total U.S. cannery receipts (st) by classification of tuna for the fourth quarters of 1991 and 1992. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Oct-Dec	Type	Albacore	Skipjack	Yellowfin[1]	TOTAL
1991	ROUND	19,800	59,600	13,000	92,400
	GILLED & GUTTED	0	*	700	700
	LOIN	0	9,900	1,700	11,600
	TOTAL (as received)	19,800	69,500	15,400	104,700
	TOTAL (estimated round wt)[2]	19,800	81,900	17,600	119,300
1992	ROUND	27,100	63,500	16,100	106,700
	GILLED & GUTTED	0	0	600	600
	LOIN	*	6,200	1,000	7,200
	TOTAL (as received)	27,100	69,700	17,600	114,500
	TOTAL (estimated round wt)[2]	27,100	77,500	18,900	123,500

*Less than 100 st reported for this category.

[1]May include a small amount of bigeye tuna.

[2]Converted to round weight by using factors of 1.11 for gilled-and-gutted and 2.25 for loins.

Table 2. Total U.S. cannery receipts (st) by classification of tuna for 1991 and 1992. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Jan-Dec	Source	Albacore	Skipjack	Yellowfin[1]	TOTAL
1991	ROUND	74,300	220,000	87,600	382,000
	GILLED & GUTTED	0	*	3,800	3,800
	LOIN	3,600	28,000	6,000	37,600
	TOTAL (as received)	77,900	248,000	97,400	423,400
	TOTAL (estimated round wt)[2]	82,500	283,000	105,300	470,800
1992	ROUND	104,300	226,800	69,900	401,000
	GILLED & GUTTED	0	0	2,600	2,600
	LOIN	*	19,800	8,400	28,300
	TOTAL (as received)	104,300	246,600	80,900	431,900
	TOTAL (estimated round wt)[2]	104,400	271,400	91,700	467,500

*Less than 100 st reported for this category.

[1]May include a small amount of bigeye tuna.

[2]Converted to round weight by using factors of 1.11 for gilled-and-gutted and 2.25 for loins.

Table 3. U.S. cannery receipts (st) of domestic and imported tuna by species for the fourth quarters of 1991, 1992 and the recent (1987-91) fourth quarter averages. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Oct-Dec	Source	Albacore	Skipjack	Yellowfin[1]	TOTAL
AMERICAN SAMOA & CALIFORNIA					
1991	DOMESTIC	100	29,200	2,600	32,000
	IMPORTED	4,100	10,500	2,600	17,100
	TOTAL	4,200	39,700	5,200	49,100
1992	DOMESTIC	1,100	29,900	7,200	38,200
	IMPORTED	7,600	6,200	1,700	15,500
	TOTAL	8,700	36,100	8,900	53,700
1987-91 Average	DOMESTIC	300	22,300	13,400	36,000
	IMPORTED	4,700	8,700	4,900	18,200
	TOTAL	5,000	31,000	18,300	54,300
PUERTO RICO					
1991	DOMESTIC	300	10,300	2,700	13,300
	IMPORTED	15,300	19,600	7,500	42,300
	TOTAL	15,600	29,800	10,200	55,700
1992	DOMESTIC	300	21,200	3,800	25,400
	IMPORTED	18,100	12,400	4,900	35,400
	TOTAL	18,500	33,600	8,700	60,800
1987-91 Average	DOMESTIC	600	6,600	11,600	18,900
	IMPORTED	18,000	17,100	9,600	44,700
	TOTAL	18,600	23,700	21,200	63,600
TOTAL					
1991	DOMESTIC	500	39,500	5,400	45,300
	IMPORTED	19,300	30,000	10,000	59,400
	TOTAL	19,800	69,500	15,400	104,700
1992	DOMESTIC	1,400	51,200	11,000	63,600
	IMPORTED	25,700	18,500	6,600	50,800
	TOTAL	27,100	69,700	17,600	114,500
1987-91 Average	DOMESTIC	1,000	28,900	25,100	54,900
	IMPORTED	22,600	25,800	14,500	62,900
	TOTAL	23,600	54,700	39,600	117,800

[1]May include a small amount of bigeye tuna.

a large increase in skipjack deliveries. The domestic component of deliveries to American Samoa/California was up 19%. Skipjack was easily the largest component of all domestic deliveries in 1992 at 163,600 st, followed by yellowfin, 48,000 st, and albacore, 6,300 st (Table 4). Domestic receipts accounted for just over 50% of the tuna delivered to U.S. canners during 1992.

Albacore was the leading import for the fourth quarter of 1992 at 25,700 st, followed by skipjack, 18,500 st, and yellowfin, 6,600 st (Table 5). The leading supplier was Taiwan, with 40% of the import market, followed by South Korea and France, with 17% and 12% of the market, respectively. The western Pacific Ocean was the main source of all three important tuna species (Table 6): skipjack (61,800 st), yellowfin (13,700 st) and albacore (11,600 st).

Contract prices for domestically caught tuna delivered to U.S. canners in the fourth quarter of 1992 were substantially lower than 1991 prices for all categories of fish (Table 7). U.S. imports of canned tuna packed in water totaled 32,900 st for the fourth quarter of 1992 and 166,700 st for the year, up 7% from 1991. As of April 11, 1993, imports of canned tuna stood at 40,800 st, down 24% from the previous year.

U.S. TUNA FISHERIES UPDATE

EASTERN PACIFIC PURSE SEINE FISHERY

During the period January through March 1993, 10 U.S. purse seiners caught an estimated 5,000 metric tons (mt) of yellowfin tuna and 5,300 mt of skipjack tuna in the eastern tropical Pacific (Figure 1). The yellowfin catch was down 12% from the 1992 catch (5,700 mt), while the skipjack catch was up 15% from the 1992 catch (4,600 mt). The fleet

Table 4. U.S. cannery receipts (st) of domestic and imported tuna by species for 1991, 1992 and the recent (1987-91) averages. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Jan-Dec	Source	Albacore	Skipjack	Yellowfin[1]	TOTAL
1991	DOMESTIC	6,400	134,900	39,700	181,000
	IMPORTED	71,600	113,100	57,700	242,400
	TOTAL	78,000	248,000	97,400	423,400
1992	DOMESTIC	6,300	163,600	48,000	217,800
	IMPORTED	98,000	83,100	33,000	214,100
	TOTAL	104,300	246,600	80,900	431,900
1987-91 Average	DOMESTIC	5,700	109,400	104,800	220,000
	IMPORTED	91,200	106,800	64,500	262,600
	TOTAL	97,000	216,300	169,400	482,600

[1]May include a small amount of bigeye tuna.

Table 5. U.S. cannery imports (st) of tuna by species[1] and source (flag of catcher vessel) for the fourth quarter of 1992. Totals for the fourth quarter of 1991 are given for comparison. Note that the flag of the catcher vessel does not necessarily reflect the country of export or point of shipment. Totals may not add due to rounding.

COUNTRY	1992				1991
	ALB	SKJ	YFT[2]	TOTAL	TOTAL
ECUADOR	0	200	0	200	2,200
F.S. MICRONESIA	0	1,800	300	2,100	0
FRANCE	100	3,900	2,100	6,100	9,100
GHANA	0	1,700	400	2,200	4,100
JAPAN	5,200	0	*	5,200	6,000
NAURU	0	200	100	200	0
PANAMA	*	500	300	800	4,200
PHILIPPINES	0	200	200	400	0
PORTUGAL	1,300	0	0	1,300	0
SIERRA LEONE	0	*	200	300	0
SOUTH KOREA	300	6,300	2,200	8,700	4,600
SPAIN	1,200	100	*	1,300	4,200
TAIWAN	17,200	2,500	700	20,500	18,400
U.S.A.	0	100	0	100	1,800
UNKNOWN	0	1,100	0	1,100	1,700
OTHER	200	*	*	200	3,100
TOTAL (as received)	25,700	18,500	6,600	50,800	59,400
TOTAL (estimated rnd wt)[3]	25,700	26,300	7,900	59,900	74,000

*Less than 100 st reported for this category.

[1]ALB=albacore; SKJ=skipjack; YFT=yellowfin.

[2]May include a small amount of bigeye tuna.

[3]Converted to round weight by using factors of 1.11 for gilled-and-gutted and 2.25 for loins.

continues to be affected by "dolphin safe" policies and is concentrating its effort on skipjack and yellowfin not associated with dolphins. However, during the first three months of 1993, 2 U.S. vessels did make a total of 34 sets on tuna associated with dolphins resulting in an incidental dolphin mortality of 12 animals.

WESTERN PACIFIC PURSE SEINE FISHERY

According to reports received by the SWFSC, 20 U.S. purse seiners fishing in the western tropical Pacific under the South Pacific Tuna Treaty landed an estimated 19,500 mt of skipjack tuna and 2,400 mt of yellowfin and bigeye tuna during the period January through March 1993 (Figure 2). The skipjack landings were down 35% from the 1992 landings (29,800 mt) and the yellowfin/bigeye landings were down 85% (from 16,000 mt). The 1993 totals are preliminary and may understate the actual landings due to delays in reporting transshipped catches.

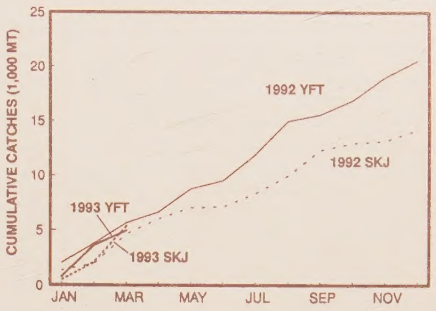

Figure 1. Cumulative tuna catches, by month, for the U.S. eastern Pacific purse seine fishery, 1991 and 1992.

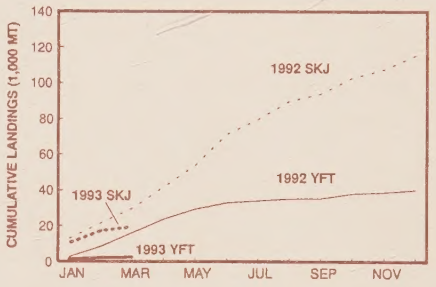

Figure 2. Cumulative tuna landings, by month, for the U.S. western Pacific purse seine fishery, 1991 and 1992.

NORTHERN PACIFIC ALBACORE FISHERY

The 1993 U.S. troll season will likely commence in late May with two scout vessels planning to travel directly from American Samoa to begin their fishing west of the international date line. Twenty or more other vessels will leave from Hawaii sometime during June.

SOUTHERN PACIFIC ALBACORE FISHERY

The 1992-93 U.S. troll season, which had gotten off to a very slow start, continued to have very low

Table 6. Receipts (st) of tuna by U.S. canneries by species[1] and area of capture for the fourth quarters of 1991 and 1992. Totals may not add due to rounding.

SOURCE	1991			1992		
	ALB	SKJ	YFT[2]	ALB	SKJ	YFT[2]
E. ATLANTIC OCEAN						
DOMESTIC	0	0	0	0	0	0
IMPORTED	7,200	10,600	3,100	6,800	1,800	700
TOTAL	7,200	10,600	3,100	6,800	1,800	700
W. ATLANTIC OCEAN						
DOMESTIC	0	200	*	0	0	0
IMPORTED	4,400	400	300	3,700	*	100
TOTAL	4,400	600	300	3,700	0	100
E. PACIFIC OCEAN						
DOMESTIC	500	13,000	4,300	1,400	1,900	1,000
IMPORTED	0	1,000	1,100	0	200	0
TOTAL	500	14,100	5,500	1,400	2,100	1,000
W. PACIFIC OCEAN						
DOMESTIC	0	26,200	1,000	*	49,300	10,000
IMPORTED	5,100	11,400	2,500	11,600	12,500	3,700
TOTAL	5,100	37,600	3,600	11,600	61,800	13,700
INDIAN OCEAN						
DOMESTIC	0	0	0	0	0	0
IMPORTED	2,700	6,600	2,900	3,500	4,000	2,100
TOTAL	2,700	6,600	2,900	3,500	4,000	2,100

*Less than 100 st reported for this category.

[1]ALB=albacore; SKJ=skipjack; YFT=yellowfin.

[2]May include a small amount of bigeye tuna.

Table 7. Contract price ranges (U.S. $ per st) for skipjack and yellowfin tuna for delivery to U.S. canneries in American Samoa and Puerto Rico by U.S. vessels arriving from trips in the fourth quarters of 1991 and 1992.

SIZE CLASS (lbs.)	SKIPJACK		YELLOWFIN	
	1991	1992	1991	1992
<3	245.00-397.50	175.00-190.00	245.00-397.50	175.00-190.00
3 to 4	445.00-597.50	375.00-390.00	445.00-597.50	375.00-390.00
4 to 7.5	640.00-792.50	570.00-585.00	640.00-792.50	570.00-585.00
7.5 to 20	705.00-857.50	620.00-635.00	715.00-867.50	630.00-645.00
>20	---	---	790.00-922.50	750.00-765.00

catch rates throughout the rest of the season. Most of the vessels had ended their season before the end of March, and the last boat quit fishing in mid-April. The lack of strong fronts and forage (juvenile mackerel) in the region have been cited by the fishermen as reasons for the poor season. Estimated landings for this season are 1,450 mt, less than half of the 3,000 mt seen just two seasons ago.

ATLANTIC BLUEFIN TUNA FISHERY

In 1992, 896 vessels participated in the U.S. Atlantic bluefin tuna fishery, landing a total of 1,038 mt. Landings for 1993 through April 23 totaled 41 mt, all under the incidental permit category.

Gary Rensink and Doug Prescott, SWFSC, and Dick Seamans, NMFS Northeast Region, contributed information for this article on fisheries updates.

REPORTS

Editor's note: Original reports are published as a service to subscribers and may not represent the views of the NMFS. Readers should contact the authors of reports for details, if needed.

U.S. PACIFIC ALBACORE FISHERIES

Gary M. Rensink, La Jolla Laboratory, Southwest Fisheries Science Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, P.O. Box 271, La Jolla, CA 92038

Albacore tuna *(Thunnus alalunga Bonnaterre)* has been an important food source for the United States since the early 1900s. The U.S. albacore fleet has operated in the north Pacific Ocean since that time, and has operated in the south Pacific Ocean since 1986. These fisheries, especially the one in the north Pacific, have undergone considerable change, and they continue to evolve today.

Vessels once built out of wood are now made of steel or fiberglass. Hydraulic gurdies, GPS navigation systems, plotters, SSB radios, color sounders, sonar, and other technological advances in equipment have enabled albacore fishermen to be increasingly successful in locating and staying with the fish. Troll vessels have consistently represented a growing percentage of the total U.S. albacore fleet, while the baitboat has all but disappeared. What was once a coastal fishery within 300 miles of the west coast of North America now sprawls west to the date line and beyond in the north Pacific, and a sizeable portion of the south Pacific Ocean is presently

fished by U.S. albacore vessels as well.

The U.S. north Pacific albacore fishery entered the 1980s on the decline. Landings that were over 20,000 metric tons (mt) annually just 5 years before were down to less than 10,000 mt (Figure 3). This trend continued throughout the decade, with a low of 2,000 mt being landed in the north Pacific in 1989. Catch per effort (number of fish caught per day fished) levels were also much lower in the 1980s than they had been previously (Figure 4). Many vessels turned to other fisheries during that time, and by the end of the decade the number of U.S. vessels fishing albacore full time was less than 100. Many blamed the Asian pelagic driftnet fleet that grew in the late 1970s and 1980s for the decline. Some biologists feel that a long-term shift in oceanographic conditions that occurred around the same time may have resulted in fewer albacore being available to U.S. fishermen. Whatever the cause, the decline in albacore catches during this time led fishermen to look for other places to find albacore, and this they began to do in the south Pacific Ocean.

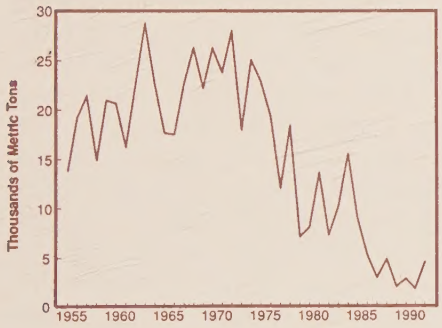

Figure 3. U.S. north Pacific commercial albacore landings, in metric tons, 1955-1992.

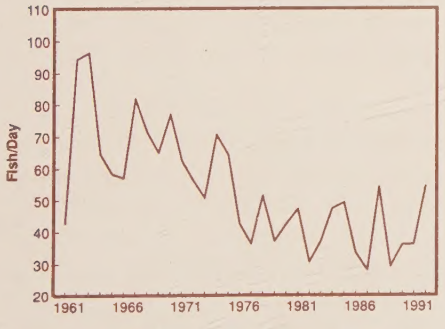

Figure 4. U.S. north Pacific commercial albacore catch per effort (number of fish caught per vessel-day fished), 1961-1992.

In January through March 1986, two U.S. troll vessels conducted exploratory fishing for albacore in the central south Pacific Ocean east of New Zealand. Catch rates were good, and with existing canneries in American Samoa not too far from the fishing grounds, prospects for developing a fishery in the area looked promising. Fishing success the following season was even more encouraging, and in subsequent years the fishery grew substantially. By 1989 U.S. south Pacific albacore catches had surpassed those in the north Pacific (Figure 5). The 1990-91 season saw 58 U.S. troll vessels participate in the south Pacific albacore fishery, landing an estimated 5,540 mt of albacore.

The present outlook for U.S. Pacific albacore fisheries is mixed and uncertain. Catches in the north Pacific in 1992 were over double those of the previous season (Figure 3), and with albacore prices up to $2,400/ton, there may be an increase in the number of vessels fishing albacore this upcoming season. Also, a worldwide moratorium on large-scale driftnet fishing, in full effect at the beginning of this year, has given hope to some that a recovery of the fishery may be seen in the near future. South Pacific albacore catches decreased substantially in 1991-92 (Figure 5), and initial reports on the 1992-93 season indicate that catches will have dropped even lower. A lack of strong fronts in the region (areas where significant numbers of albacore are usually found), possibly caused by an El Nino-type event in parts of the Pacific Ocean during the past two years, has been suggested as having decreased the availability of albacore to the south Pacific troll fishery. It is hoped that the higher catches of recent years will return once ocean conditions are back to normal.

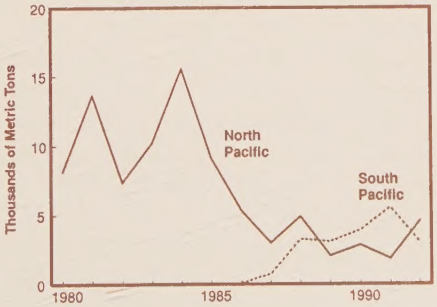

Figure 5. U.S. north Pacific (1980-1992) and south Pacific (1986-1992) commercial albacore landings in metric

RECENT SWFSC PUBLICATION

An abstract from a recently published paper written by a SWFSC scientist is also presented in this space to announce its availability and report results of tuna research conducted by Center staff.

"DIFFERENCES IN DOLPHIN MORTALITY RATES IN NIGHT AND DAY SETS FOR THE U.S. EASTERN TROPICAL PACIFIC TUNA PURSE SEINE FISHERY"

Atilio L. Coan, Jr., Kenneth E. Wallace and Alan R. Jackson, La Jolla Laboratory, Southwest Fisheries Science Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, P.O. Box 271, La Jolla, California 92038. *Published in Marine Fisheries Review, Volume 54, Number 2, 1992*

Because dolphins sometimes travel with yellowfin tuna, *Thunnus albacares*, in the eastern tropical Pacific (ETP), purse seiners use the dolphins to locate and capture tuna schools. During the process of setting the purse seine nets, dolphins often become entangled and drown before they can be released. Data for the U.S. purse seine fleet in the ETP during 1979-88 show that dolphin mortality rates in sets made

during the night are higher than mortality rates in sets made during the day. Even with efforts to reduce night-set mortality rates through the use of high-intensity floodlights, night set mortality rates remain higher. The data are also used to simulate a regulation on the fishery aimed at eliminating night sets and show that dolphin mortality rates would decrease.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN TUNA FISHERIES

Editor's note: The following news items, compiled from fishery trade and industry journals, newspapers and NMFS reports, are provided only as a service to our readers. The NMFS does not guarantee their accuracy.

UNITED STATES

Observers on U.S. East Coast Seiners a Possibility--The National Marine Fisheries Service and tuna purse seiners are talking about getting observers into the East Coast tuna fisheries in 1993, according to federal officials and a tuna fisherman who hopes official witnesses will resolve a new round of debate over Atlantic bluefin tuna. After repeated requests by purse seine operators, NMFS is saying it wants to have on-board observers working this summer, according to Roger Hillhouse, a spotter pilot and part owner of two seiners. NMFS officials confirm they are trying to figure a way to get observers, but stress it depends on funding. Verifying the seiners' catch became an issue again late in the summer of 1992 when Mid-Atlantic anglers reported catching bluefin tuna while purse seiners nearby caught skipjack. It's been documented that bluefin and skipjack can commingle, and sport-fishing groups believe seiners are taking excessive bluefin bycatch with the skipjack. They demanded observers or the closing of the purse seine fishery. Accuracy in landing reports has been the crux of many tuna fishermen's arguments over how NMFS is trying to comply with the recommendations of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. (*National Fisherman*, January 1983)

WESTERN PACIFIC OCEAN

Southern Bluefin Tuna Ranching Update--The Taiyo Fisheries Company of Japan plans to increase shipments of southern bluefin tuna raised on its Australian ranch. Purse seine caught fish are placed in grow-out cages for fattening and, after reaching a market size of 15-20 kilograms, are shipped to Japan. Taiyo hopes to increase shipments to 5,000 fish in 1993, a 66% increase over its 1992 shipment of 3,000 fish. Taiyo began southern bluefin tuna ranching in 1992 with the construction of four large-scale grow-out cages at Port Lincoln in the state of South Australia. Ranch-raised fish were sold at Tokyo's Tsukiji market for approximately $30 per kilo during the fall of 1992. Ranched southern bluefin tuna has a higher oil content than wild-caught fish and is therefore more valued on the Japanese market. Taiyo's plans are another sign of the Japanese sashimi tuna industry's increasing efforts to obtain a reliable supply of bluefin tuna via ranching and aquaculture. (NMFS *Weekly Highlights*, December 28, 1992, - January 1, 1993)

Japanese Purse Seiners' 1992 Tuna Catch--Japanese purse seiners fishing in the southwest Pacific caught 183,000 mt of tuna in 1992, an all-time record. The total value of the 1992 catch ($176 million), however, did not exceed the record value of the 1990 catch ($193 million). Catches of both yellowfin (55,400 mt) and skipjack (122,074 mt) were good, with yellowfin catches posting a 29% increase compared to 1991. Unit prices for both species decreased, however, with skipjack selling for $0.88 per kilogram (down 3%) and yellowfin selling for $1.15 per kilogram (down 14%). (NMFS *Weekly Highlights*, March 8-12, 1993)

Korea-France Fishery Talks Deadlocked--The Republic of Korea and France held talks in January 1993 concerning renewal of a bilateral agreement that allows Korean tuna vessels access to the French 200-mile zone around its Pacific territories. The two sides agreed on catch allocations, fees and the number of fishing vessels but could not resolve differences over the amount of the catch to be offloaded at French Pacific ports and the length of time Korean vessels would be required to stay at these ports. The talks were scheduled to resume in April 1993. The 1992 Korea-France fishery agreement allowed 125 Korean longliners to catch 6,100 mt of tuna in French Polynesian waters for a fee of $835,000. (NMFS *Weekly Highlights*, February 1-5, 1993)

Japan-New Zealand Tuna Talks--Bilateral fishery talks concerning Japanese tuna fishing in the New Zealand exclusive economic zone concluded without agreement in Tokyo. In December 1992, New Zealand informed Japan of its proposed regulations for Japanese fishing during the 1992-93 season. During the January 1993 Tokyo meeting, Japan requested less stringent terms regarding fishing zones, vessel numbers, fees and observers, but New Zealand promised only to review its terms. The final agreement will be reached via diplomatic channels. (NMFS *Weekly Highlights*, February 8-12, 1993)

Taiwan Government Announces End to Driftnet Fishing– The Taiwan Council of Agriculture has formally announced that Taiwanese driftnet vessels will not be permitted to use driftnet gear as of January 1, 1993. Driftnet vessels have not been allowed to leave Taiwanese ports for high seas fishing operations since November 11, 1992. The 31 Taiwanese driftnet

UPCOMING TUNA MEETINGS

(Organizer; meeting type: sci=science, adm=administration)

1993

- MAY 17-20. Forty-Fourth Tuna Conference. Lake Arrowhead, California. (Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and SWFSC; sci)
- JUN 8-10. Annual Meeting of the IATTC. Port Vila, Vanuatu. (IATTC; adm)
- OCT 4-8. Expert Consultation on Stock Assessment of Tunas in the Indian Ocean. Victoria, Seychelles. (Indo Pacific Tuna Development and Management Programme; sci)
- OCT 4-8. Stock Assessment of West Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Session. Madrid, Spain. (International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT); sci)
- OCT 26-28. Third INFOFISH Tuna Trade Conference. Bangkok, Thailand. (INFOFISH; adm)
- NOV 1-5. SCRS Plenary Meeting, ICCAT. Madrid, Spain. (ICCAT; sci)
- NOV 8-12. Annual Meeting of the ICCAT. Madrid, Spain. (ICCAT; adm)
- DEC. Thirteenth North Pacific Albacore Workshop. La Jolla, California. (SWFSC; sci)

1994

- FEB 16. Japan Tuna Conference. Shimizu, Japan. (National Institute of Far Seas Fisheries; adm)

vessels in the Indian Ocean were to cease fishing and return to Taiwan by the end of 1992, or call at the ports of Singapore or Cape Town, South Africa, for inspection to ensure that driftnet equipment and gear have been dismantled and properly disposed. These vessels may continue fishing by other methods in the Indian Ocean or the southwestern Atlantic only after inspection. The 64 Taiwanese driftnet vessels fishing in the north Pacific Ocean were required to return to Taiwan for inspection by December 15, 1992. (NMFS *Weekly Highlights*, December 21-25, 1992)

EASTERN PACIFIC OCEAN

Mexican 1992 Tuna Catch Stable--Preliminary figures suggest the Mexican eastern tropical Pacific (ETP) tuna catch remained relatively unchanged in 1992 at 127,200 metric tons (mt) - a decrease of only 1,000 mt from 1991. The decrease is primarily due to a small drop in yellowfin landings as a result of lower catches outside the Commission Yellowfin Regulation Area. The only other species caught in significant quantities is skipjack (11,500 mt). Unlike other ETP fishermen (Venezuela, for example) who have increased effort on skipjack, the Mexican fishermen caught 8% less skipjack in 1992. The current U.S. embargo on yellowfin does not affect skipjack, but as the species sells at a substantial discount compared to yellowfin, Mexican fishermen continue to show little interest in it. Mexican-flagged vessels accounted for nearly 40% of all tuna caught in the ETP, with most of the remainder caught by Venezuela (17%), Vanuatu (13%), Ecuador (12%) and the United States (12%). (NMFS *Weekly Highlights*, March 1-5, 1993)

EASTERN ATLANTIC OCEAN

French Tuna Fishermen Want to Continue Driftnetting--Yves L'Helgouac'h, president of the French Tuna Committee, has begun a campaign to extend the use of large (over 2.5 kilometer) pelagic driftnets beyond the December 1993 deadline. The French won a special 1-year exemption which allowed them to continue using large pelagic driftnets until December 1993. This was part of a United Nations program reached in 1992 to outlaw the use of pelagic driftnetting around the world. French fishermen have begun a legal battle to overturn the expected ban on the use of large driftnets. An appeal was made by 33 boat owners to the Court of Justice in Luxembourg and a second appeal by a single boat owner was made to a business tribunal in France. Both actions are expected to be overturned, but may help lay the foundation for further appeals. The Tuna Committee claims that the rule limiting driftnetting to nets shorter than 2.5 km after 1993 is contrary to EC laws, which state that all fisheries regulations should be based on scientific evidence. The Tuna Committee argues that the driftnet regulation is an environmental issue, not a fisheries issue, and thus EC fisheries laws do not apply. (NMFS *Weekly Highlights*, February 8-12, 1993)

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